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Soviet Naval Training: A Question of Effectiveness

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Soviet Naval Training: A Question of Effectiveness

*Central Intelligence Agency
Directorate of Intelligence*

May 1977

Key Judgments

Major changes in the sixties created new pressures on the system by which the Soviet Navy had traditionally trained its personnel. These pressures included a rapid increase in the scope and pace of naval operations, the acquisition of new, complex ships and weapon systems, and major revisions in the Soviet draft laws to shorten the obligatory term of service for conscripts by a year. These changes created a demand for a greater number of experienced personnel than ever before.

The navy and the Soviet government responded to these pressures by modifying their training programs, introducing a mandatory nationwide system of preinduction training, overhauling courses of instruction in their training schools, and emphasizing the teaching of narrow specialties. These changes have allowed the Soviets to make great strides toward training personnel to carry out the navy's expanded responsibilities for operations on the high seas. As a result, the navy has proved itself capable of responding to crises and other events that affect Soviet interests, as well as of maintaining a routine presence in many of the world's oceans.

At the same time, a shortage of skilled manpower and overcentralization of the command process are continuing problems for the navy. These problems appear to have limited the effectiveness of Soviet naval responses to some crisis situations. In a normal peacetime operating environment, these shortcomings probably are not as evident as they would be in wartime, when they could seriously affect the Soviet Navy's ability to carry out its responsibilities efficiently.

The capability of the training establishment to solve these problems in the future is questionable. There is a good chance that the Soviets will lose some ground in attempting to meet the demand for personnel who can operate and maintain the increasingly complex equipment entering the naval inventory. They may attempt to make naval service

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more attractive by increasing salaries, fringe benefits, and the like in order to compete more successfully with the civilian sector for skilled manpower. But such changes probably would have a minimal effect on the navy's capability to carry out its expanding roles. Furthermore, traditional reliance on centralized authority and discouragement of individual initiative will continue to make it difficult for otherwise well-trained personnel to perform to their full potential.

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Preface

The Soviet Navy, like other Soviet military forces, believes it must have ideologically motivated, well-trained personnel to accomplish its assigned missions. Its training methods and goals, unlike those of Western naval powers, have been influenced by a heavy emphasis on political indoctrination. But training also has been affected by problems—such as rising costs—common to all navies.

This report describes Soviet naval training practices and analyzes some of the reasons they have developed as they have. It assesses the capabilities of personnel trained under the Soviet system and explores some of the pressures for change that may be facing the navy in the future. The report deals primarily with the training of shipboard personnel.

The evidence on which the judgments in this report are based comes from a variety of sources. Unclassified Soviet writings constitute a major source. A careful reading of the open literature in conjunction with other sources—attache reports, defector reports, and reports on exercise activity—provides some insight into the status and direction of the Soviet naval training program.

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Soviet Naval Training: A Question of Effectiveness

Influences on the Training Program

The personnel training program of the Soviet Navy has been shaped by three major influences—the doctrine of socialist competition, the universal military draft, and the desire of the Communist Party to mold the ideological viewpoint of the Soviet people.

Socialist Competition

According to Soviet ideologues, socialist competition is possible only in a socialist society. Such competition is viewed as totally different from the antagonistic type of competition that the Soviets believe is the norm in capitalist societies. In a socialist system, competition ceases to be divisive and thus can be used as a tool to smooth the path to the ultimate Communist state.

Since the concept was first introduced into the military in 1929, socialist competition has been used to increase the levels of combat capability while providing proper political indoctrination and control.

Socialist competition in the Soviet Navy is handled at the individual ship level. The commanding officer of each unit is responsible for the conduct of the competition, but the political officer and the primary party and Komsomol organizations aboard each ship are most often the sustaining forces behind it.

The Soviets use socialist competition to reinforce training goals. At the beginning of every training period, each sailor makes written pledges regarding the level of expertise he will attempt to achieve. These pledges are then used as a basis for judging his performance.

To reinforce the importance of the competition, the Soviets use a variety of incentives, both positive and negative. Publicizing the names of the leaders of the competition as well as of those lagging behind is a common device to maintain peer pressure on the participants. Other, more positive incentives include laudatory letters, decorations, gifts, monetary awards, and special shore leaves. Officers also can receive early grade promotions for extraordinary successes and, more commonly, preferential treatment in enrolling in military educational institutions. Group awards, such

as pennants and banners, are a common means of recognizing outstanding performances by individual units.

Special competitions are organized on a short-term basis in addition to those geared to the annual training cycle. A ship conducting a long cruise, for example, might organize a competition among its watch sections. Throughout the voyage, these sections would compete against one another to achieve the most rapid and error-free completion of their assigned duties. The ship's officers would keep a daily and weekly tally of the progress of each section. Interim results, along with praise for the leaders and criticisms of those falling behind, would be posted in the wall newspaper or publicized on the ship's radio. The outstanding section each week might be rewarded with a special pie or cake. At the end of the voyage, the section judged the winner might receive monetary awards, have its picture taken with the ship's flag, or receive formal letters of commendation from the captain.

Although quality of performance continues to be of concern to the Soviets, competition is often oriented toward achieving time-oriented goals. Such an approach can result in a stop-watch mentality whereby speed counts for more than how well the job is done. This is especially true when inexperienced officers direct the competition. The junior officers tend to rely too much on established, time-oriented norms to evaluate the performance of their subordinates.

The Draft and Other Sources of Manpower

The Soviet Navy has a professional officer corps and a small cadre of warrant officers and extended-duty servicemen (those who voluntarily reenlist for military service beyond the required three-year term), but it depends on a universal draft to fill most of its manpower requirements. Conscripts selected for naval shipboard duty or for coastal navy combat supply units are required by law to serve for three years, while those selected for the naval infantry, naval aviation, and certain other shore billets serve for two years. The actual reenlistment rate in the Soviet Navy is not known. Some Western analysts believe it could be as

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low as 10 percent. In that event, some 75 percent of the manpower strength would be conscripts, drafted between the ages of 18 and 20. The reenlistment rate, whatever its precise value, is low, and there is a constant influx of inexperienced personnel, which makes heavy demands on the training program.

Because so few conscripts choose to reenlist, the navy has had a continuous shortage of experienced enlisted men to fill lower level leadership positions. In an attempt to retain more veterans, the Soviets in 1972 reintroduced the rank of warrant officer, conferring quasi-officer status and other benefits on qualified reenlistees. The new warrant officer program apparently has failed to attract a sufficient number of qualified personnel, however, and the Soviets have been forced to continue to use extended-duty servicemen.

Commissioned officers apparently make up about 15 to 20 percent of total naval manpower. Most are graduates of one of the 11 higher naval schools scattered throughout the Soviet Union. With few exceptions, these graduates make the service their career. The officer retention rate is high because regular officers usually serve on active duty for the full period of their eligibility. The duration of their service is set on the basis of their age and rank (see inset).

Officers can be given early discharges only in case of chronic illness, a general reduction in force, inability to fulfill service obligations, conduct unbecoming an officer, or conviction of a crime. Thus, by law, the option to terminate active duty lies with the military service, not with the individual.

The Party and the Training Process

The navy's personnel training program is set up not only to teach military skills but also to provide

political and ideological indoctrination. Political training is a major part of the Soviet training program. Its goals appear to be to ensure that the navy remains a reliable tool of the state and party and, at the same time, to imbue those who will return to civilian life with proper Communist attitudes. To accomplish these goals, the Soviets have set up a pervasive political network which extends from a political directorate subordinate to the commander in chief of the navy down to individual cadres assigned to most units of the fleet. Each intermediate command echelon also has a deputy commander for political affairs with an appropriate staff.

Military spokesmen have often professed to see a causal relationship between the proper ideological outlook and the ability of military forces to accomplish their assigned missions. (See box inset.) Such expressions are not surprising, inasmuch as ideological orthodoxy and political reliability are of great importance in promotion to the senior grades.

The heavy expenditures of time and money devoted to political indoctrination appear to be yielding mixed results. Available evidence suggests that most enlisted men find the mandatory weekly political lectures boring, repetitious, and unconvincing. Although 90 percent of the officers are said to be members or candidate members of the Communist Party or the Komsomol, many probably join only for the purpose of enhancing their careers. Thus, commitment to the party is nominal in many cases.

Challenges of the Sixties

In the sixties, three major changes created new challenges for the navy's training system: the development of more far-flung naval operations, the acquisition of more advanced equipment, and major

Officers' Terms of Service

Grade	US Equivalent Rank	Maximum Age of Eligibility
Junior Lieutenant through Captain-Lieutenant	Ensign through Lieutenant	40
Captain 3rd Rank and Captain 2nd Rank	Lieutenant Commander through Commander	45
Captain 1st Rank	Captain	50
Rear Admiral through Vice Admiral	Rear Admiral	55
Admiral through Admiral of the Fleet	Admiral through Fleet Admiral	60

Note: The law also states that, if needed, personnel may remain on active military duty up to five years beyond the ages cited above.

Politics and the Military

The main wealth of the fleet is the people. Devoted heart and soul to the cause of Lenin's party, they perform their difficult and responsible service. . . .

Admiral F. Sizov, 1974

Communist and Komsomol members, who make up 90 percent of all soldiers, are the cementing basis of the army and navy. . . .

Marshal of the Soviet Union
I. I. Yakubovskiy, 1975

Not only up-to-date combat equipment but also highly qualified cadres, superb masters of their craft, armed with advanced Marxist-Leninist theory, boundlessly devoted to the party and the Soviet people, constitute the strength and power of our navy.

Admiral G. A. Bondarenko, 1975

Only an ideologically convinced, disciplined, and intelligent soldier or sailor, possessing high combat and moral qualities and strong physical conditioning can master and employ with maximum effect the weapons entrusted to him to achieve victory over the very strongest enemy.

Report of the All-Army
Conference of Excellent-Rated
Personnel in Combat
and Political Training, 1975

In the summary report of the CC CPSU at the 24th Party Congress, it was stressed that military service in our country is not only a school for military skills. It is at the same time an excellent school for ideological and physical tempering and for discipline and organization.

Colonel General A. Mayorov, 1975

revisions in the law on universal military service. These all combined to subject the training system to new pressures, none of which shows much sign of abating.

The sixties saw the beginning of change in the scope and pace of naval operations. From a force dedicated primarily to the defense of Soviet maritime frontiers, the navy began to evolve into one with increasing responsibilities for peacetime operations in more

remote parts of the world's oceans. The continuous presence of Soviet naval units outside home operating areas began in 1964, when the USSR deployed a small force to the Mediterranean Sea.¹ The scope of operations expanded between 1968 and 1970 to include a continuous presence in the Indian Ocean and off West Africa, and periodic operations in the Caribbean Sea. Soviet nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines also began nearly constant patrols off the east and west coasts of the United States. Between 1965 and 1970, Soviet naval deployments grew an average of 40 percent per year. Since 1970, deployments have continued to expand, but at a reduced rate.

By the mid-1960s, a drive to provide the Soviet Navy with better equipment was well underway. The Soviets began replacing the relatively simple-to-operate, easy-to-maintain units of World War II design with more modern ones equipped with advanced subsystems. The new units were equipped with better and more complex electronics and weapons, including guided missiles. In addition, nuclear energy became an important source of power in the submarine force.

The third major change was the 1968 draft law, which reduced the obligatory term of service for conscripts from four years to three for seagoing personnel and from three years to two for shore-based personnel. Thus, just as the introduction of more modern naval combatants and the expansion of operating areas were creating a demand for more experienced personnel, the navy was faced with the prospect of having even a smaller proportion of veterans than before. The navy had the choice either of passively accepting the one-year decrease in conscript service time, or of modifying the training program to reduce the amount of formal training. The other services, of course, faced similar problems.

Current Training Program

The Soviets responded to the pressures of the late sixties by modifying their programs in schools and by emphasizing the teaching of narrow specialties. In addition, the government introduced a mandatory nationwide system of preinduction training for all services. These modifications were designed to maintain the combat capabilities of military personnel while reducing the impact of new conditions.

¹ The Soviets did deploy a group of general purpose submarines and associated support ships to Albania in 1959, but this deployment ended in 1961.

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Preinduction Training

The mandatory preinduction training program is conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense, but other agencies exercise direct control of the day-to-day administration of the program. The law on universal military service specifies that preinduction training will be given to all full-time male students above the eighth grade. Local educational authorities, under the general control of the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education, have the responsibility for setting up these programs, subject to the approval and supervision of the local military commissariats. Factories and other places of work also are required by the law to set up preinduction training centers for draft-age youth not in school. This training has a standard curriculum and is designed to familiarize youths with the functions of the armed forces, the military lifestyle, the military oath, and service regulations. Some basic weapons familiarization, including the live firing of small caliber rifles, is also part of the curriculum.

Although other organizations participate, DOSAAF (the All-Union Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy) is the focal point for preinduction training. As of September 1974, over 315,000 primary DOSAAF organizations were in existence, and the numbers were continuing to expand. DOSAAF manages leisure hours clubs which sponsor hobbies with military applications. While these clubs are voluntary, the local military commissariats select a number of young people each year at age 17 to undergo mandatory DOSAAF-sponsored training in specific military specialties prior to induction.

For younger children, party organizations conduct a summer series of voluntary military games. These games are designed to foster an awareness of military subjects and skills. The Young Pioneer organizations sponsor *Zarnitsa* (Summer Lightning), which provides youth with an introduction to military life and routine. *Orlenok* (Eaglet), a more vigorous game for older youth, is sponsored by the Komsomol organization.

The success of preinduction training has been mixed. The program gives most recruits an introduction to military discipline and routine at little direct expense to the military. Individual enterprises rather than the military are required to foot most of the bills connected with the program. Reports suggest that some graduates of the mandatory DOSAAF-sponsored specialist training have been trained well enough to

skip further specialist training after induction and go directly to the fleets. These cases, however, probably are exceptions rather than the rule.

The preinduction training process and DOSAAF have come under continuing criticism. The Soviet press contains numerous charges of formalism in classroom instruction, poorly qualified instructors, and incomplete facilities and training bases. Because the resources for this program come out of the funds of the enterprise, individual plant supervisors probably have little incentive to fully develop the program.

Service Training Institutions

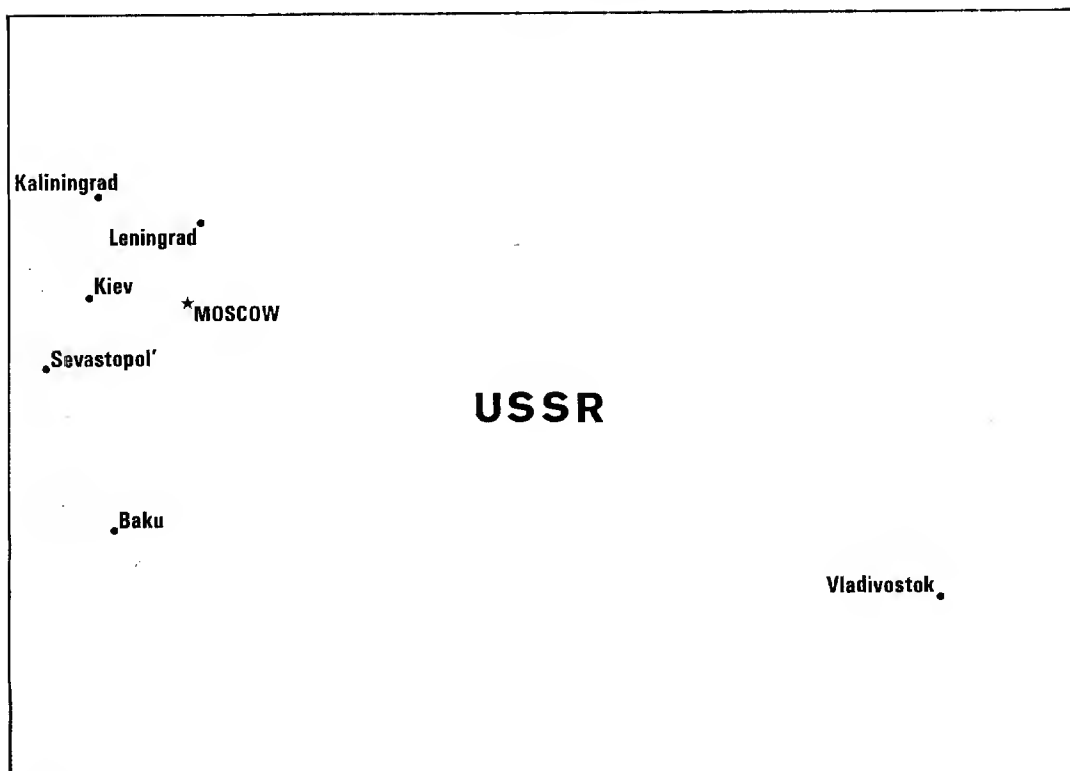
The challenges of the sixties affected the ways in which institutions of formal training for both officers and conscripts carried out their responsibilities. Curricula were changed and, although officer candidates spent the same amount of time in school as before, the preliminary training period for conscripts was sharply cut.

Officer Schools. The bulk of the Soviet naval officer corps is drawn from graduates of 11 higher naval schools—roughly comparable to Western naval academies—scattered throughout the USSR (see inset). The course of study in all but one of these schools lasts five years. Officers with specialties common to all the services—such as logistics and supply, medicine, or jurisprudence—attend combined arms schools, each of which trains officers in a particular specialty for all branches of the armed forces.

A few officers are graduates of voluntary reserve officer programs offered at many civilian schools. Reserve officers are liable for two or three years of active duty, but few apparently are called up. Those who are usually do not serve beyond their minimum time. Even so, the reserve officer program provides the Soviet Navy with a pool of trained personnel which can be drawn on if needed.

Personnel attending the higher naval schools undergo an extensive selection process before admission. The candidates begin by applying through their local military commissariats. These agencies ensure that the prospective officers are physically fit and have the appropriate educational background. The local commissariats also are required to conduct extensive political and security checks on the applicants. After these steps, the candidates take competitive examinations in mathematics, science, language, and literature at the schools of their choice. Despite continuing talk about the importance of ensuring that candidates possess the proper psychological traits, the Soviets do

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Soviet Naval Educational Institutions

Name and Location
of School

Type of Training

Commissioning Schools

Black Sea Higher Naval School <i>iment</i> P. S. Nakhimov, Sevastopol'	Basic line
Caspian Sea Higher Naval School <i>iment</i> S. M. Kirov, Baku	Basic line—also trains foreign naval officers
Higher Naval School <i>iment</i> M. V. Frunze, Leningrad	Basic line
Higher Naval School of Radioelectronics <i>imeni</i> A. S. Popov, Leningrad	Communications and sonar
Higher Naval Submarine School <i>iment</i> Leninskiy Komsomol, Leningrad	Submarine officers
Kaliningrad Higher Naval School, Kaliningrad	Basic line
Kiev Higher Naval Political School, Kiev	Political
Leningrad Higher Naval Engineering School <i>iment</i> V. I. Lenin, Leningrad	Engineering
Pacific Ocean Higher Naval School <i>iment</i> S. O. Makarov, Vladivostok	Basic line
Sevastopol' Higher Naval Engineering School, Sevastopol'	Engineering
Higher Naval Engineering School <i>iment</i> Dzerzhinskiy, Leningrad	Engineering

Advanced School

Naval Academy <i>imeni</i> A. A. Grechko, Leningrad	Advanced command training
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not appear to conduct much psychological or aptitude testing.

Most cadets enter the higher naval schools directly upon graduation from civilian secondary schools, but some are also drawn from the Nakhimov School in Leningrad—a preparatory school run along military lines. The Soviets have stressed the recruitment of active-duty servicemen or those who have completed their obligatory term of service, apparently on the assumption they would be more mature and better prepared for careers as naval officers than newly graduated high school students. Another source of cadets is those few personnel who transfer from civilian to military schools. After successfully completing one year at a civilian institute and passing a medical examination and political and security checks, individuals can transfer to the higher naval schools without further examination.

The increased technological complexity of naval ships and expansion of the responsibilities and operating areas of the Soviet Navy created the need for some changes in the curricula of the higher naval schools. Previously, the curricula were oriented toward teaching specific technical skills rather than exposing the cadets to the broad, command-oriented training characteristic of many Western naval academies. Most graduates of these schools received engineering degrees in narrow specialty areas. Course work emphasized the theoretical aspects of the specialty being taught with little attention to practical applications. The new realities imposed on the navy, however, made the acquisition of practical skills and a more complete knowledge of seamanship more pressing.

While the curricula of Soviet naval schools remain more technically oriented and narrowly defined than those of their Western counterparts, the Soviet schools now place more emphasis on increasing the cadets' understanding of tactics and on the practical aspects of career specialties. Some articles in the early seventies, for example, recommended that schools which previously had allotted only about 10 percent of the cadets' time to practical work, increase the time devoted to such activity to nearly 50 percent.

The schools also have made a greater effort to give the cadets more experience at sea prior to graduation. Rather than rely on obsolescent combatant ships as in the past, the Soviets introduced new cadet training ships specifically designed for this purpose. Students also are sent to units of the fleet during the summer for practical experience. The typical graduate of

Frunze Higher Naval School in Leningrad, for example, is expected to spend almost 10 months on board ship during his five-year course of study.

Enlisted Training Detachments. Since 1968, preliminary naval training for conscripts has changed sharply in both duration and content. To minimize the impact of the shortened draft period, the time devoted to formal training courses was curtailed. The amount of time now used for preliminary training of draftees varies according to the complexity of the specialty, but the average period appears to be about four to six months. The first month or so of this period is used primarily for basic military training—close order drill, weapons familiarization, military regulations, and the like—while the remainder is devoted to specialist training.

The Soviets also altered the content of the training course by deleting much of the theoretical underpinning of individual specialties in favor of more study of practical applications. Moreover, the trainees are given a narrower exposure to their specialty than in the past. A diesel engine mechanic, for example, might learn about only one or two types of diesels during his formal training. Thus, he would have to be retrained if assigned to a unit equipped with an engine other than a type that he had studied. The training program is not designed to make experts of the conscripts, but rather to familiarize them with a specialty. Proficiency is not expected until after the person arrives at his ship, where he undergoes intensive on-the-job training.

The quality of enlisted specialist training appears to vary from one detachment to another. Many graduates of these courses have indicated that the training was rudimentary and did not adequately prepare them for their duties. Most detachments apparently still rely heavily on the lecture method. The teaching staffs often have many graduates of the course who do not have experience in or detailed knowledge of the specialty they are teaching. Another common complaint has been the lack of modern, sophisticated training aids; some schools apparently have only a few outdated pieces of equipment.

Levels of Proficiency

The number of different specialties (similar to Western military occupational specialties) has proliferated as technological innovations and new weapon systems have been brought into service. One Soviet writer has estimated that the number of unique specialties grew from about 60 during World War II

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to more than 1,000 in 1974. While these figures include specialty categories for all branches of the Soviet military, the same relative increase appears to hold true for the navy.

The Soviet Navy has designated four levels of specialist proficiency for both officers and enlisted men. In ascending order of capability, they are: specialist third, second, and first class, and master specialist. These ratings are reportedly independent of the individual's rank. On graduation from higher naval schools or enlisted training detachments, most officers and enlisted men apparently receive the lowest proficiency rating, although outstanding students apparently receive higher ratings. Within a few months after arrival at their units, the neophyte specialists are required to pass tests which authorize them to stand watches independently. The Soviets may use these tests to confirm the ratings of the personnel.

More advanced ratings are earned by passing further proficiency tests. Each testing period apparently extends over several days and consists of written, oral, and practical phases. Brigade-level staff personnel administer the tests for advancement to second- or first-class specialist levels. Advancement to master specialist requires an appearance before an examination board at fleet level. The amount of time it takes to fulfill requirements for the more advanced ratings depends on the specialty and on individual capabilities, but it appears that the Soviets expect attainment of a second-class rating by about the end of the first year of service and a first-class rating during the third year. Although a few have done it in less time, it generally takes about six to eight years to gain a rating of master specialist.

Persons who have earned specialist ratings are required to reconfirm them periodically. One source indicated that naval officers were required to defend their specialist rating every six months. The testing schedules apparently are adhered to rigidly, especially for the higher ratings, and failure to take or to pass the tests can result in a loss of rating. Another source indicated that a warrant officer lost his master specialist rating because he had been on leave during the time the tests were given.

Incentives used to encourage personnel to attain more advanced ratings vary. Although moral suasion and peer pressure are brought to bear, added pay probably is the best incentive. Third-class ratings do not bring extra pay, but the more advanced ratings do. A conscript, for example, can almost double his

basic pay by earning a specialist first-class rating. Besides extra pay, the higher ratings attained by career personnel probably bring better opportunities for promotion and preferred assignments.

Training in the Fleets

Separate training institutions and detachments teach incoming personnel the basics of narrow military specialties, but a working knowledge of those specialties most often is gained only after the men arrive at their first permanent duty station. Several types of training are used at the fleet level to foster proficiency in the requisite military skills, including continuation of classroom training, on-the-job training, individual study programs, and experience derived from exercises and extended cruises.

The training program is geared toward the rapid assimilation of the semiannual influx of new personnel into the fleets. The yearly program apparently is, divided into two subcycles, each of about six months' duration. Each subcycle includes periods of training at fleet facilities ashore and on ships in port. Exercises at sea, beginning with the simple and progressing to the more complex, round out each cycle. Often the cycle culminates with fleet-wide or interfleet exercises. Distant cruises, while described by the Soviets as the most valuable part of the training process, do not occur as regularly.

Training Ashore. Although the Soviets believe that training at sea is the best way to develop experienced sailors, they feel such training can be effective only after sound preparation in fleet and unit training facilities ashore. The Soviets have begun to make greater use of such facilities in the past few years, believing that they provide realistic training at relatively low cost. The use of training facilities ashore conserves fuel and results in less wear and tear on shipboard equipment and in less disruption of training schedules because of bad weather (a major consideration for the Soviets). Despite this increased emphasis, however, there appears to be little centralized control over the development of unit training rooms and facilities. Each naval brigade—typically composed of 8 to 12 ships—apparently is responsible for setting up its own training facilities and for providing its own training aids.

Only a few centrally located fleet training facilities have been established. These facilities generally conduct specialized programs, such as damage control training. These centralized facilities are open to all, but some apparently do not have permanent staffs of

instructors. Consequently, unit officers are required to serve as instructors when their men use the facilities.

On-the-Job Training. On-the-job training constitutes the major portion of the Soviet personnel training program for both officers and enlisted men, and, with the expanded scope and frequency of at-sea operations, opportunities for such training have increased. The Soviets use such training to fill in the many gaps in knowledge which remain after the completion of formal training ashore. When a unit is in port, regular specialty training sessions are to be included in its weekly training schedules. Although such training is under the control of departmental officers, the warrant officers and more experienced enlisted personnel often must conduct the day-to-day training of the newcomers who are assigned as understudies. Traditionally, those personnel about to be released from active duty are required to train a replacement before they leave the service.

Two methods are used to conduct on-the-job training—mass training classes and individual study programs. Individual study programs apparently are being used with increasing frequency, especially in training specialists. Because each program can be tailored to the trainee's own level of skill and achievement, mastery of a particular specialty can be more efficiently and effectively achieved. Moreover, this method does not disrupt the operating routine of the ship. Although more effective in these respects, individual study programs put an increased burden on the departmental officers who must run them, because the officers involved must prepare and monitor several plans.

Unit Exercises. The highest level of shipboard training is the integrated exercising of an entire crew. Such training is used to reinforce military skills, to practice intraship and intership coordination, and to test the overall combat capabilities of the forces. Exercise plans apparently are designed to take each ship through a sequence of activities, starting with simple, single-ship exercises and continuing through more complex, multiship evolutions. This progression is intended to bring the ships and their crews up to satisfactory levels of combat capability as quickly as possible.

The conduct of some of these exercises has been criticized in the Soviet press, especially the lack of initiative displayed by many shipboard officers in preparing and carrying out progressively more difficult activities. This reportedly has reduced the

training value of such exercises. Another common criticism is the reported use of unrealistic scenarios.

Our observation of some Soviet naval exercises—especially smaller ones—tends to substantiate these press criticisms. Many of the smaller exercises are stereotyped and rudimentary. They appear to be short, pro forma affairs with little, if any, unrestricted activity. Such training does little to encourage command leadership or to increase crew capabilities beyond the most basic levels.

Major exercises at the fleet or interfleet level, on the other hand, have shown a trend toward more complex and realistic scenarios, possibly because of increased attention from higher authorities in the navy, the Ministry of Defense, and the political leadership. Besides providing an opportunity to practice on a large scale the skills learned through the training year, the larger exercises often are used to test the integration of new weapon and sensor systems into the naval inventory. Such exercises normally are preceded by an intensive period of smaller preparatory exercises.

Next to fleet exercises, long-range cruises provide the most realistic training, and Soviet military writers have described long sea voyages as the most valuable part of the naval training process, largely because such voyages subject crews to psychological stresses not possible to simulate in other types of training. Nevertheless, units deployed far from home waters, especially surface ships, in many cases spend most of their time at anchor. They do participate in routine exercises, but apparently not with the same regularity as when they are in home waters, and exercises they do carry out are rudimentary in nature.

Advanced Schools

Although the Soviet naval training program is intended mainly to develop expertise in both the single-term and career personnel through on-the-job training, some advanced, formal training is available to selected personnel—mostly careerists—in both the enlisted and officer ranks. The advanced training is carried out at both military and civilian institutions.

Career Enlisted Training. Advanced training for career enlisted personnel is intended mainly to provide a deeper appreciation of a given specialty, but it also provides leadership skills which better equip the trainees for their intended positions in the lower management ranks. Special centers have been established for advanced training of warrant officers in each of the fleet areas, and there is evidence which suggests similar schools exist for career petty officers.

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The duration of the courses at these centers appears to vary according to the qualifications of the individuals attending. Other evidence suggests that the course of study at the warrant officers' schools is two years long but that some especially qualified personnel graduate in less time. Warrant officers and extended-duty servicemen also are allowed to enroll in courses offered at civilian technical and higher educational institutions, either as correspondents or as full-time students, an option that is specifically denied to men serving their initial term of service.

Advanced Officer Training. Members of the officer corps also are expected to polish their substantive and leadership skills through on-the-job training. Although officers have several opportunities to further their formal education during the course of their careers (see chart page 10), the selection process for advanced schooling is competitive, and not all officers are eligible or selected to receive it.

During their first assignments in the fleets (which can last up to about six years), officers are expected to become masters of their areas of specialization. While junior officers concentrate on narrow specialist fields during the early years of their careers, their potential for future line-command positions is being evaluated by their commanding officers. (Officers with engineering or engineer-technical degrees, however, are generally excluded from consideration for such positions.) At the end of the evaluation and selection process, the junior officer corps is divided into two groups—those who will remain specialists throughout their careers, and those who will be trained as line commanders. Each of these categories has its own career development program.

Specialists. Formal educational opportunities, both at the junior and senior officer levels, are offered to officers who intend to remain specialists throughout their careers. Both the higher naval schools and the joint-services commissioning schools, for example, offer postgraduate resident and correspondence courses. These courses are of eight months' to three years' duration. Most Soviet officers probably serve five to six years in the fleets before beginning such postgraduate work. Officers of more senior rank can be admitted either to the Naval Academy or to various joint-services academies either as resident or correspondence students. Academy courses, which last from two to three years, prepare the officers for higher staff positions and probably provide them with a broadening experience within their area of specialty. In most cases, these courses probably serve as a

prerequisite for promotion to the higher ranks and positions.

Line Officers. Officers selected for development as line commanders follow a similar but generally separate career development program. For example, future commanders apparently are enrolled in a precommand course after four to ten years' service. Such courses reportedly last about a year and are intended to prepare the officers for their first command. Those who are expected to be tapped for even higher positions attend the Naval Academy *iment* A. A. Grechko in Leningrad.

This school, the highest training institution in the navy, is open to officers of middle grade from all arms of the navy. The courses at the academy vary from two to four years and are intended to prepare officers for senior command and staff positions. The ultimate level of officer training is provided by the Higher Military Academy of the General Staff in Moscow. This two-year school prepares officers from all services for key positions in the Ministry of Defense and for command and staff positions in major commands.

Assessment of the Program

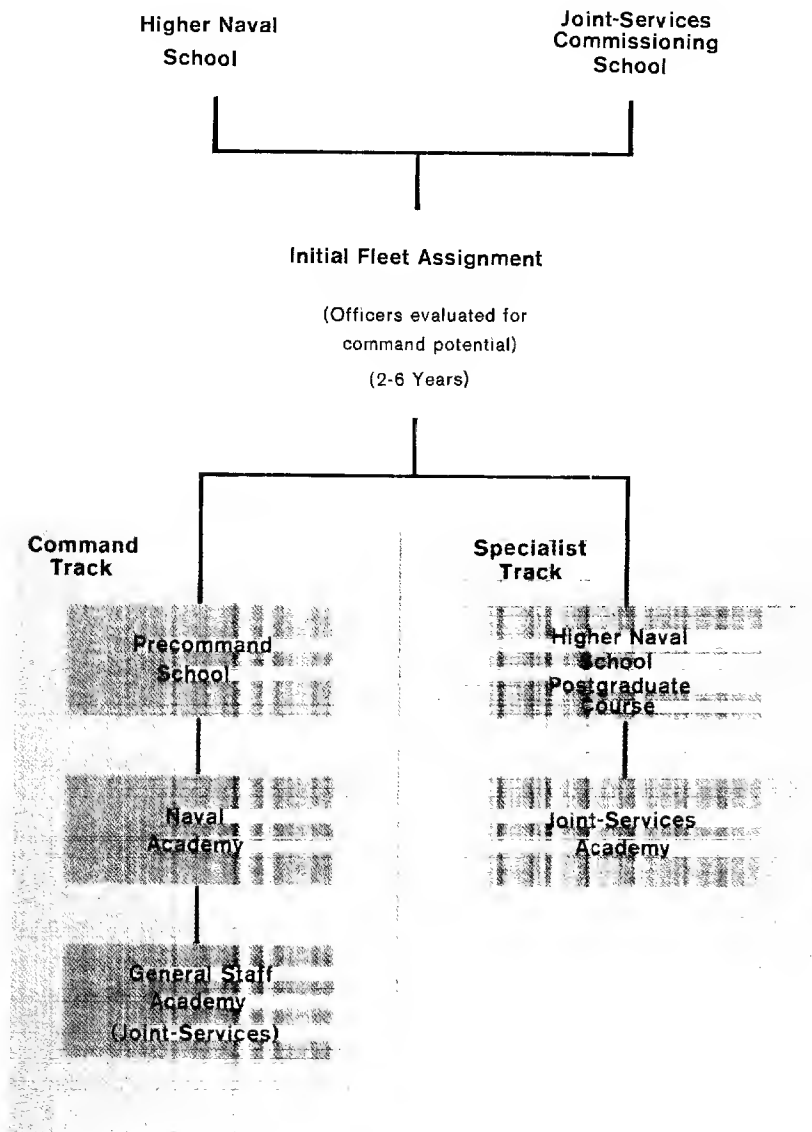
The Soviet Navy has made much progress in training personnel to carry out its expanding responsibilities. Since the sixties, the navy has evolved from a force oriented toward the defense of the Soviet coastal areas to one structured for operations on the high seas. The Soviet Navy has proved itself capable of responding to crises and other events that affect Soviet state interests and has for some time now been maintaining a routine presence in many of the world's oceans.

At the same time, the navy has experienced continuing problems, such as shortages of skilled manpower and overcentralization of the command process. These chronic problems in turn have tended to foster an erosion of morale and may be degrading the ability of Soviet naval forces to operate as effectively and efficiently as they otherwise might. Some of the problems result from the rapid expansion of naval technology and of Soviet naval responsibilities and capabilities. Others result from compromises made in the training program to enable the navy to continue to perform its missions in the face of new or continuing constraints. Most problems appear to be essentially those of any peacetime force and probably would disappear in combat, when appeals to patriotism would be more meaningful. A few, however, may go deeper than that and might influence the

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Officer Training In the Soviet Navy



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ability of the navy to perform its missions in both peace and war.

Empirical data about the effect of the personnel training program on Soviet naval efficiency are sparse and can lead to conflicting conclusions. The maintenance of a permanent naval presence in many of the world's oceans suggests that the Soviets are able at least to perform routine operations with minimal difficulty. Soviet naval forces also appear capable, for the most part, of accomplishing their training goals during exercises, whether in home waters or on the high seas. In Soviet at-sea exercises, however, the activities of all participants frequently are carefully controlled, so the navy's ability to react in a nonexercise situation to an enemy whose actions cannot be predicted is more difficult to assess.

Soviet naval responses to international crises appear to have met with mixed success. During US mining of the waters off North Vietnam and in the several Arab-Israeli wars, the Soviets were able quickly to muster a reaction force to demonstrate Soviet concern. At the same time, these naval forces often provided little more than a symbolic presence, once they were on the scene. But the relative inactivity of many of these task groups almost certainly derived from Soviet foreign policy considerations rather than from an inherent inability of the forces to carry out their most likely missions.

In other cases, such as instances in which Soviet units have had to respond to shipboard casualties, the record has not been as good. The activities of the afflicted as well as of the assisting units during these incidents—the loss of an N-class submarine in 1970, the near-loss of an H-II-class submarine in 1972, and the loss of a Kashin-class destroyer in 1974—suggest continuing deficiencies in the Soviet ability to cope with emergencies at sea. Although units responded quickly in each case, actual rescue attempts and other activities at the scene did not appear to be well coordinated and were often characterized by poor seamanship. The rescue attempts appeared to have been hindered by such things as excessive interference by remote headquarters, ineffective coordination and control by on-scene commanders, and insufficient training of shipboard personnel. Poor ship design may also have hindered rescue operations.

These episodes highlight two of the most prominent problems affecting Soviet naval operations, problems which the training program has had little success in overcoming: the shortage of skilled manpower, and the tendency to overcentralize decisionmaking.

Skills Shortage

The chronic shortage of skilled manpower, especially in the enlisted ranks, is a long-recognized problem; numerous commentators, including Admiral Gorshkov, have stressed the need to improve the skill levels of naval personnel. The problem stems largely from the continuing inability of the navy to provide sufficient incentives to retain a significant proportion of its experienced specialists.

The problem has been exacerbated by navy training methods. The current training system, which relies heavily upon on-the-job training after only a minimum of formal classroom training, often produces personnel who have only a superficial understanding of their specialty. This type of training tends to develop personnel who, although they eventually may gain a working knowledge of their own particular responsibilities, often have little appreciation of the capabilities and limitations of an overall weapon system or ship. While this is more often true in the case of conscripts than of career personnel, it could have a pronounced effect on a unit's overall performance, because conscripts make up such a large percentage of total manpower.

In part to minimize the impact of this problem, naval personnel are assigned to relatively long tours of duty in the same position. Conscripts, for example, normally remain on the same assignment for the duration of their enlistments. Extended-duty servicemen and warrant officers generally transfer only upon reenlistment. Officers, too, spend comparatively long periods aboard one unit—tours of five years or more are not uncommon. In addition, the Soviets have mounted a campaign to encourage their enlisted personnel to gain proficiency in a second, related specialty during the last year of service.

Overcentralization

The Soviet personnel training program attempts to inculcate political orthodoxy, rigid discipline, and operational conformity. One result is a tendency toward overcentralization of the command process and excessive dependence on higher authority. The tendency to view situations through the eyes of one's commander becomes a state of mind which carries over from the training process into the operation of individual naval units. The maintenance of strong central control over all naval activities in the fleets is buttressed by the sometimes heavy hand of staff officers and the political apparatus, which intrudes into the day-to-day life of individual units. Such

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control appears to be a shortcoming because it stifles the development of good leadership qualities and can result in a lack of initiative by commanders facing unforeseen situations.

Insistence on strong central control has, on occasion, had debilitating effects on naval operations. A well-documented example of this problem was the near-loss of an H-II ballistic missile submarine at sea in February 1972. The Soviets deployed a large task group to aid the stricken vessel, but timorous on-scene commanders failed to provide the leadership and imagination necessary to generate an effective rescue effort. Naval headquarters in Moscow, apparently not trusting the judgment of on-scene commanders, assumed overall control of the effort. Those on the scene, apparently afraid to make innovative decisions, followed Moscow's lead, even when its suggestions clearly would not work.

The Soviets have paid lip service in the open press to the need to develop the imagination and initiative of commanding officers, but the observed activities of the operating forces do not reflect a significant relaxation of central control such as would be required to allow development of greater initiative. Stereotyped exercise routines which allow little or no unrestricted operations are still the rule. Such activities do little to raise skill levels or to imbue naval commanders with boldness and independent judgment.

Under peacetime conditions, the shortcomings in leadership training and the lack of initiative are not readily apparent and probably have little impact on day-to-day operations. Under crisis, combat, or emergency conditions, however, the efficient conduct of operations could be jeopardized.

The Effects on Morale

There are some indications that morale and discipline are declining in the Soviet Navy,² in part, perhaps, as a result of inflexibilities in both the political and military chains of command. A recent mutiny aboard a Krivak-class destroyer in the Baltic Fleet points to this possibility. Although the mutiny itself probably was an isolated incident, the pressures which led to it may well be common throughout the navy.

The ship in question was the subject of an unusually scathing article in the Soviet press some 11 months prior to the mutiny. That the Soviets were

aware of problems on board the ship and still were unable to prevent the situation from deteriorating to the point of mutiny tends to suggest a certain amount of inflexibility on the part of the hierarchy in dealing with morale and disciplinary problems. Nonetheless, the net result of the mutiny almost certainly will be to put more stress on orthodoxy and centralized command responsibility, further reducing the likelihood of developing greater initiative and independent decisionmaking in lower command echelons.

Prospects

The continuing acquisition of technically more advanced ships, weapon systems, and sensors will increase the demand for well-qualified naval specialists. The new units are likely to spend more time in areas distant from the Soviet Union, thus increasing the need for well-trained personnel capable of operating and maintaining their equipment without benefit of nearby shipyard experts. This prospect undoubtedly will influence how Soviet naval personnel are trained, both during formal training periods ashore and after arrival in the fleets.

Shallow practical training which characterizes present-day programs will have to be expanded to include the theoretical underpinnings of the specialties, even though this will result in shorter periods of productive time from the graduates.

Although more advanced formal schooling is likely, training in the fleets probably will continue to receive the most attention. Improvements in fleet-level training probably will include increased use of more advanced simulators ashore and more realistic training at sea, especially in the case of small-scale exercises in home waters.

The Soviets are also likely to place greater emphasis on efforts to retain skilled personnel. In the process, however, they could create as many problems as they solve. In developing a more professional, career-oriented service, for example, they might cut back the universal draft. The Soviets, however, view the draft not only as a means of providing manpower for the military but also as a way to provide political indoctrination to a broad segment of the population.

Another way to meet the increased demand for more experienced personnel would be to lengthen the term of service that conscripts are required to serve. There have been periodic hints that some in the naval hierarchy favor this option. Thus far, there have been only minor alterations in the conscription law. More

² For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see CIA Intelligence Memorandum SR 77-10038, *Morale and Discipline Problems in the Soviet Armed Forces*.

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substantial changes might not be feasible because of the competing demands of the civilian economy for skilled workers. The competition for skilled manpower may well increase in the future if, as some demographic studies suggest, the Soviets experience acute manpower shortages in the eighties. Moreover, a move to increase the length of service would limit the usefulness of military service as an instrument of political indoctrination, assuming the overall size of the armed services remained about the same.

A potentially less disruptive step would be for the navy to increase its efforts to retain skilled personnel by making military service more attractive through larger salaries, better housing, and more fringe benefits. The reintroduction of the rank of warrant officer in 1972—while not a great success—may be a precursor of additional steps in this direction. Such programs would be expensive in terms of both time and money, but they might avoid some of the pitfalls of other possible solutions.

The use of military training as a tool for political indoctrination is not likely to diminish, and this in turn will limit the extent to which flexibility can be injected into the training process.

Regardless of what changes may take place, the principal features of the current Soviet training system are likely to remain. The navy's ability to assimilate and use effectively the more complex equipment that will continue to enter its inventory is not likely to improve, and may even deteriorate. Time constraints will continue to limit severely the opportunities for broader based formal training and more realistic exercise activities in the fleets. Likewise, failure to retain a greater percentage of experienced personnel would continue to stultify growth in shipboard expertise. The products of these negative influences further propagate themselves by eroding morale and discipline.

Although the emphasis periodically peaks and ebbs, Soviet naval officers almost certainly will continue to be taught to rely on centralized command procedures for controlling their forces at sea. This continued reliance on centralized authority and the consequent discouragement of low-level command initiative will offset some of the benefits of improved training programs and make it difficult for otherwise well-trained commanding officers of the future to exercise their full leadership potential.

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